



Testimony on HB746
Trans Health Equity Act of 2022
Position: **FAVORABLE**

To Chair Pendergrass & Members of the Health & Government Operations Committee,

My name is Brige Dumais. I am the Political Organizer with 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East, the largest healthcare workers union in the nation. We represent 10,000 members who work in hospitals and Long-Term Care facilities across Maryland/DC. Hundreds of our members work at LGBTQ health centers, including Chase Brexton in Maryland and Whitman Walker in DC; and many of our members that work at those (and other) facilities are LGBTQ themselves. Our union supports HB746: the Trans Health Equity Act of 2022 and we urge the Committee to vote yes on this bill to require the Maryland Medical Assistance Program to cover medically necessary gender-affirming treatment.

Given that transgender people are more likely to live in poverty than our cisgender counterparts, there is a glaring gap in the ability of transgender people in Maryland to access affordable, gender affirming care. Transgender Marylanders are currently being forced to navigate a tiered healthcare system where certain gender affirming healthcare procedures and medications are not covered through Medicaid. While some transgender folks can get gender affirming care through private health insurance, low income transgender Marylanders who cannot afford private insurance are left behind. Transgender Marylanders' ability to have health insurance to cover gender affirming care should not be based on their employer's willingness to provide health insurance in the first place, and certainly should not be subject to any employer's potential biases against transgender people that would cause the employer to not provide insurance plans that cover gender affirming care. Gender affirming care, like any healthcare, should be a decision made between a patient and their doctor.

Gender affirming care is lifesaving healthcare. Access to gender affirming care vastly reduces the suicide rates of transgender people, especially transgender youth, – who have a much higher than the rate of suicide for cisgender youth. A recent study highlighted in Forbes Magazine found that 52% of transgender & nonbinary youth seriously contemplated or attempted suicide in 2020. The article stated that transgender people who participated in the study said that “More than half [of transgender people] thought they would be better off dead, rather than trying to live with rejection, isolation, loneliness, bullying and being targeted by politicians and activists pushing anti-trans legislation.”

On a personal note, I am gender non-binary. Both as an Organizer with 1199SEIU and as a transgender Marylander, I urge the committee to issue a favorable report on the Trans Health Equity Act of 2022.

Sincerely,

Brige Dumais, they/them
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